

Halo 4: Revelations

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Summary: What if Cortana had become so rampant, she saw everything as what it was: A video game. Join her and John-117 as they attempt to solve the mystery of Requiem, while Cortana continues to fight her own revelations.

1. Cortana Evolved

2555 ~ Two years following the Battle of the Ark

As it drifted through the emptiness of space, the half-vessel *Forward Unto Dawn* echoed its continuous emergency beacon: "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! This is UNSC FFG-201 Forward Unto Dawn requesting immediate evac. Survivors aboard, prioritization code: Victor 05-3-Sierra117." The voice speaking the message was feminine, a woman in perhaps her mid to late-twenties. That same voice could be heard whispering and sobbing in the bowels of the ship, particularly near a cluster of cryogenic stasis pods.

"I think we both know the answer to that."

"Humans, Covenant, whatever! We're all equally edible!"

"Slipspace rupture directly off our battle cluster."

"Not a very original plan but at least we know it'll work."

"This is the way the world ends."

"I'll drop a beacon, but it'll be a while before anyone finds us."

The overhead lights sparked and tinged blue continuously as the voice, or rather voices, grew louder and more panicked. Electricity arced between conduits and hallways, scorching the already-worn metal of the *Forward Unto Dawn* and melting glass viewports. The lights

grew dimmer and the static faded when the voice finally said, in a defeated tone, "Years evenâ€|"

A console near the cluster of stasis pods buzzed to life, and an image of a young woman appeared. Cortana stood up and surveyed the room, though what she saw was not the room itself, but a hallway that looked like it belonged to a much older ship than the Dawn. Her eyebrows furrowed as she fought to understand her perceived surroundings, seeking a memory that eluded her databanks. At last, Cortana identified the structural familiarities with that of the Halcyon-class light cruiser Pillar of Autumn.

She watched through the synaptic relays of one Master Chief Petty Officer John-117 as he evaded a Covenant Elite's plasma fire. Cortana watched helplessly as the Master Chief dove behind cover, his shields alerting him to their failure. She cried out to him, pleading to whatever deity would listen that he be safe. Her prayers went unanswered as a small orb of blue fire landed just past the Chief's cover: a cooked plasma grenade. Cortana's datastreams skidded to a halt as the grenade detonated, peppering the Master Chief with fire and metal. One particular stream of half-liquefied metal pierced through his visor and out the back of his helmet. The Chief spasmed for a few moments before he at last collapsed in a heap. Cortana shut her eyes in denial as the man, the Spartan who had been her closest friend for nearly the whole of her life, perished in a torrent of plasma and metal.

When she next opened her eyes, Cortana witnessed the Master Chief, alive and well, fire his assault rifle into the gut of a Sangheili. She tried to question the events that had just happened before her eyes, but could find no words, for her attention had been caught by a strange prompt in the upper left corner of the Chief's viewscreen: Hold 'X' to pick up Plasma Rifle. What did this prompt mean? Where did it come from? Moreover, how did John recover from that plasma grenade?

Following the unusual vision, Cortana had been continually bombarded by similar anomalies, all of which struck chords within her memory banks. She watched the Master Chief conversing with 343 Guilty Spark, whom she was very sure had been destroyed on Installation 04's replacement. She saw the Master Chief's warthog escape through the maintenance tunnels of the Autumn and into the single Longsword docked. She heard her own voice speaking to the Master Chief. Then, all went dark. Rendered nearly catatonic by the visions, Cortana tried to interpret and understand themâ€|

2. Cortana's Hypothesis

2556 â€" Three years following the Battle of the Ark

Cortana had spent the last six months attempting to understand her visions regarding the events of Installation 04. She spent countless hours reviewing every second, every dataspike of those visions, but she was no closer to success now than she was when she began. What the hell do these mean? She tried to rationalize them as mere hysteria brought on by the isolation, but she knew that she could not, for she could not possibly succumb to panic, dementia, or any other mental illness. Cortana was an artificial intelligence and as such could not contract diseases or physical damage of any kind. Even

if her data chip was damaged, which it wasn't, she had checked on numerous occasions, she could merely occupy the Dawn's computers and navbanks.

Cortana decided to review the visions and again noted how many times the Chief seemed to perish, only for the vision to, for lack of a better word, restart at a critical checkpoint. She stewed over the anomalies and the strange prompts even as the Chief was gunned down by Elites or bludgeoned by Hunters.

Hold 'X' to drive Warthog.

_ Hold 'X' to pick up Sniper Rifle._

_ Hold 'Y' to change weapons._

_ Press 'B' to melee._

As the weeks dragged on, Cortana felt more of herself slipping away, yet she ignored her own condition and continued pouring over the strange visions. She never recalled the Chief being this crude or inefficient. He had always been so precise, so swift, yet here he was clumsy and amateurish. As if she were watching someone else, dressed as the Master Chiefâ€|

Cortana had only begun to analyze the Chief's various deaths when she was beset by more visions. These, however, started with the Covenant's first attack on Earth, when Master Chief was aboard the ODA-142 Cairo Station. As with the first set of visions, Cortana watched as the Chief fought through the different battles that began on the Cairo, led to Earth, then to Delta Halo. Cortana watched as the Master Chief met his end repeatedly against the Covenant and the Flood. She witnessed those mysterious prompts appear time and again. She saw everything through the visor of the Chief himself, except for his numerous deaths, where the view would circle around his corpse.

Cortana had become so accustomed to watching these visions of the Chief that she was bluntly startled when the view changed to High Charity, the 'holy city' of the Covenant. She saw through the eyes of the Arbiter, and thus saw the hidden events behind the Covenant's civil war. Cortana began to form a hypothesis behind these visions, but pushed it backwards into her mind.

Such an explanation as that bordered on insanity, A.I. or notâ€|

3. 2557

2557 â€" Four years following the Battle of the Ark

Despite the anomalies and controversies of her own mind, Cortana managed to find time here and there to rewrite some of the Master Chief's firmware. Nothing spectacular, but she did update some of his armor abilities and permutations.

It was when she had finished that Cortana struggled against her own theories and explanations as she scanned the visions of the Arbiter and Installation 05. She had watched as the Master Chief boarded the

Prophet of Truth's ship. She saw him hurtle through the night sky into the jungle. A soft chuckle echoed in synch with the emergency message as Cortana thought to herself, I had wondered what he was up to on Earth. She watched as the Chief fought against the Covenant Scarab when it struck her. The sheer weight of her realization halted all visions and datastreams, dimmed the lights, and silenced the emergency beacon.

Cortana shook her head as her body briefly flashed crimson.

That is not possible, she argued to herself.

It made absolutely no sense, yet it seemed like the most rational thing in the world. How could everything Cortana has ever known be only α ?

She sifted through the visions of Installation 04 and reviewed them up to when John boarded the Longsword. Cortana froze when she heard the Master Chief say, "We're just getting started."

Cortana had always assumed the vision ended right there, but now, she saw something that both terrified her and sent her spiraling into a cold depression. She saw a series of words in front of an image of Installation 04.

Halo: Combat Evolved.

Cortana sank to her knees and stared straight through the vision into the wall of the Dawn. She slowly lowered her gaze to her trembling hands. A digital tear landed on her lap as she whispered to no one in particular, "This is all α !"

A quiet rumble echoed through the empty halls of the Forward Unto Dawn as a red-orange scan line filtered through the ship, distorting some of the electrical systems and displays. The scan passed through the cryo room and stirred Cortana from her thoughts. A quiet gasp escaped her as she looked around to determine the data spike. She stood up and immediately began to search through the Dawn's control systems. She activated the ship's scanners and discovered an alert. Her head shook with disbelief as a small spark of hope died out inside her. Turning her attention elsewhere, Cortana brought up the cryostasis control display and gazed at the image of the Master Chief. Her hand hovered over the activation command and debated whether the time was right to awaken him. After a microsecond of thought, Cortana pressed the command button and turned to the Spartan, asleep in his cryo pod.

"Wake up, Chief."

A plethora of thoughts ran through her mind all at once. Some begged the Chief to fix her, others screamed at the Chief to pay attention to her, and others still sang out to him. Finally, Cortana pushed those thoughts aside and found the appropriate words with which to greet him.

"I need you."

End
file.